

## CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A method of assisting in correct diagnosis of a problem exhibited by a product having at least one component part, the method comprising:

inputting to a database a description of the problem, a part identifier for the at least one component part, a description of the at least one component part, a product identifier, and at least one hint for assisting in diagnosing the problem;

generating a hint file in the database and associating it with the at least one component part; and

downloading the hint file to a parts ordering system and a parts catalog system in association with the part identifier, such that whenever a request to order the at least one part is entered into the parts ordering system or an inquiry for the part is made to the parts catalog system, the hint will be displayed.

2. The method of claim 1 further comprising prior to the downloading of the hint file:

forwarding the hint file to an authorized product team; and

refining the hint file in accordance with inputs from the authorized product team.

3. The method of claim 1 further comprising prior to downloading the hint file:

forwarding the hint file to an approval organization; and

proceeding to downloading only after approval of the hint file by the approval organization.

4. The method of claim 2 further comprising after refining the hint file:

forwarding the hint file to an approval organization; and

proceeding to the downloading step only after approval of the hint file by the approval organization.

5. The method of claim 1 wherein the displayed hint alerts a viewer that the problem will not be solved by replacement of the at least one component.

6. The method of claim 6 wherein the displayed hint presents a suggested solution to the problem.

7. A method of assisting in correct diagnosis of a problem exhibited by an automotive vehicle having at least one component part, the method comprising:

inputting to a database a description of the problem, a part identifier for the at least one component part, a description of the component part, a vehicle platform identifier, and at least one hint for assisting in diagnosing the problem;

generating a hint file in the database and associating it with the at least one component part;

forwarding the hint file to an authorized vehicle platform team;

refining the hint file in accordance with input from the authorized vehicle platform team;

forwarding the refined hint file to an approval organization for review, further refinement if necessary, and approval, resulting in an approved hint file; and

downloading the approved hint file to a parts ordering system and a parts catalog system in association with the part identifier, such that whenever a request to order the at least one part is entered into the parts ordering system or an inquiry over the part is entered into the parts catalog system, the hint will be automatically displayed along with conventional part information.

8. The method of claim 7 further comprising preventing a completion of placing an order for the at least one part until a requester enters an acknowledgement to the parts ordering system acknowledging that the hint has been displayed.

9. The method of claim 7 further comprising periodically transmitting a refined hint file to a translation service operative to translate the hint into at least one other language and to send the translated hint back to the database.

10. The method of claim 7 wherein the displayed hint alerts a viewer that the problem will not be solved by replacement of the at least one component.

11. The method of claim 10 wherein the displayed hint presents a suggested solution to the problem.

12. An arrangement for assisting in correct diagnosis of a problem exhibited by a product having at least one component part, the arrangement comprising:

a database and associated database engine adapted to communicate with a plurality of organizations within an entity responsible for distributing the at least one component part to product customers;

a parts ordering system and a parts catalog system coupled for communication with the database and with at least one parts and service providing entity for the product;

wherein the database is operative to receive from at least one of the plurality of organizations a description of the problem, a part identifier for the at least one component part, a product identifier, and at least one hint for assisting in diagnosing the problem, to generate a hint file in the database, associated with the at least one component part and to download the hint file to the parts ordering system and the parts catalog system; and

wherein the parts ordering system and the parts catalog system are operative upon receiving a request or an inquiry for the at least one component from the at least one parts and service providing entity to display the hint to the at least one parts and service providing entity.

13. The arrangement of claim 12 wherein the plurality of organizations include a team of specialists for the product; and

wherein the database engine is further operative to forward the hint file to the team for refining the hint file.

14. The arrangement of claim 12 wherein the plurality of organizations includes an approval organization; and

wherein the database engine is further operative to inhibit downloading of the hint file until receipt of approval from the approval organization.

15. The arrangement of claim 12 wherein the parts ordering system is further operative to prevent completion of an order for the at least one part until receipt of a signal from the parts and service providing entity acknowledging a display of the hint.

16. The arrangement of claim 12 wherein the displayed hint alerts a viewer that the problem will not be solved by replacing the at least one component.

17. The arrangement of claim 16 wherein the displayed hint presents a suggested solution to the problem.